HISTORY OF THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF MILWAUKEE, 1897-1910

BY

MARVIN WACHMAN

B.S., Northwestern University, 1939
M.A., Northwestern University, 1940

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN HISTORY IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, 1942

URBANA, ILLINOIS
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was undertaken at the suggestion of Professor Fred A. Shannon of the University of Illinois. His advice has been very helpful. The author is especially indebted to Mr. Frederic F. Heath, journalist, and member of the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors since 1910; Mr. Albert Schnabel, Treasurer of the Milwaukee County Historical Society; and Mr. Theodore Mueller, Archivist of the Milwaukee County Historical Museum and Library. The librarians of the Milwaukee Public Library and the University of Wisconsin Library, and the permanent officials of the Federated Trades Council were also of great assistance.

INTRODUCTION

The city of Milwaukee had a Socialist administration during most of the years from 1910 to 1940. Yet a detailed account of the rise of the party which put that administration into office, has never been written.

It is the purpose of this dissertation to present the story of the growth of the Social-Democratic Party of Milwaukee in as accurate a manner as possible. The party first entered the political arena in 1897, and captured the electorate in 1910. Roughly, those dates comprise the limits of this study.

By necessity, the press of the Social-Democratic party has been heavily relied on. However, the views of the opposition regarding the party's growth have by no means been neglected.

The word "socialist" has been capitalized only when reference is made to a definite political party. "Socialist" and "Social-Democratic" have been used interchangeably, but the Socialist Labor party has, in every case, been referred to as such.

HISTORY OF THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF MILWAUKEE, 1897-1910

On Friday night, July 9, 1897, the foundation of Branch One of the Social Democracy of America was laid. The scene was Ethical Hall in the locally-called German Athens of America, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Eugene Victor Debs gave the main speech of the evening to a group of seventy-five to one hundred listeners, and Victor L. Berger was one of the first to formally join the organization.[1] As simply as that began an important episode in Milwaukee's history. But it was the culmination of a complicated maze of events beginning back in the 1840's.

The Social-Democratic party of Milwaukee can be faintly traced back to the German liberals, designated as "forty-eighters," who settled in the Milwaukee area in the years immediately following 1848.[2] However, it was distinctly later groups under the leadership of Victor L. Berger, which formed the nucleus of the party.

Berger had come to America in 1879 and had been engaged in the Milwaukee Public School system as a teacher of German in 1882.[3] He became a follower of Henry George and the single-taxers, but dropped this for socialism.[4] In the late 'eighties he was named the *erste sprecher* (first speaker) of the South Side Turnverein of Milwaukee, known under his leadership as the Red Turn Society.[5]

In January, 1893, Berger became editor of the tri-weekly *Arbeiter Zeitung* and changed it to the daily *Wisconsin Vorwaerts*.[6] His taking over the paper marked the real rise in the fortunes of Milwaukee socialists, and the inauguration of a real propaganda campaign. It was not long before a *Sozialistischer Verein* was meeting under Berger's direction, and becoming a factor in Milwaukee politics.

At its inception the Verein, and the socialist movement as a

[1] *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 10, 1897; Milwaukee *The Wisconsin Vorwaerts*, July 10, 1897. Hereafter these newspapers will be referred to as *Sentinel* and *Vorwaerts*.

[2] J. H. Alois Lacher, *The German Element in Wisconsin* (Milwaukee, 1895), 18.

[3] *The Milwaukee Journal*, December 7, 1897. Hereafter referred to as *Journal*.

[4] William George Bruce, *I Was Born in America* (Milwaukee, 1937), 219.

[5] Victor L. Berger, "Early Socialists in Milwaukee," in *History of the Milwaukee Social-Democratic Victories* (Alfred W. Mance, ed., Milwaukee, 1911), note on 54.

[6] *Vorwaerts*, January 3, 1893.

whole in Milwaukee, was composed entirely of Germans. However, by 1896, an appeal had been made to the "Yankee" element of Milwaukee, and some members of the intellectual Fabian Society had become outspoken socialists.[7] The new socialist movement, led by Berger, was greatly strengthened from another quarter, by gaining adherents from the older socialist party, the Socialist Labor party. The rigid membership rules, the organization methods, and the New York ruling clique of the S. L. P. were distasteful to many, and they drifted to the embryonic Social Democracy.[8]

Still another source of membership to the newly forming party was the Populist party. The socialists and Populists had many political principles in common. However, they were incompatible on several counts, and the socialists were looking toward an independent existence with no ties binding them to other parties. By November, 1896, the socio-Populist alliance, which had previously existed in Wisconsin, was broken.[9]

Cutting across all the groups already mentioned were the trade-unionists, who were traditionally reformist, and among whom were many easy converts for the socialist cause. From its very first issue in 1893[10] the *Vorwaerts* had catered to its trade-union constituency, and by 1897, a sizeable portion of the trade-unionists had become socialists.[11]

In spite of the growth of the socialist movement in Milwaukee, by its encroachments on various groups, a cohesive factor was lacking; it was supplied in the summer of 1897 through the personality of Eugene V. Debs and the organization of the Social Democracy of America.

Victor Berger had been one of those instrumental in converting Debs to socialism.[12] Those two men, aided by a half dozen colleagues, succeeded in building the Social Democracy of America out of the ruins of the American Railway Union.[13] The platform of the new party, which was formed in Chicago, contained a great deal of phraseology concerning a colonization

[7] Frederic F. Heath, "How I Became a Socialist," in *The Comrade*, II, No. 7 (April, 1903), 155; Conversation of author with Frederic Heath on June 17, 1942.

[8] Girard, Kansas *The Appeal to Reason*, July 2, 1898. Hereafter referred to as *Appeal to Reason*.

[9] *Sentinel*, November 1, 1896; *Vorwaerts*, November 10, 1896.

[10] *Vorwaerts*, January 3, 1893.

[11] *Berger*, op. cit., 59.

[12] Eugene V. Debs, "How I Became a Socialist," in *The Comrade*, I, No. 7, (April, 1902), 48-49.

[13] Chicago *The Social Democrat*, July 1, 1897.

scheme; but Berger and his Milwaukee supporters were interested only in the immediate demands of the platform dealing with public ownership, alleviation of unemployment, and proportional representation.[14] Berger had preached identical ideas as early as January, 1893.[15]

Thus, on July 9, 1897, Debs and Berger consummated Branch One of the Social Democracy in Milwaukee. But the political experiences of the Social Democracy of Milwaukee in its first year were not overly promising. In the spring elections of 1898, they polled around 2,400 votes to 18,000 for the Republicans, and 26,000 for the combined Democrats and Populists.[16] In the fall elections of the same year the Social Democrats fared even worse, polling only about 2,500 in the entire state.[17]

Meanwhile, an interstitial struggle had been going on within the Social Democracy of America. The colonization and anti-colonization wings of the party had been at odds for a year; and at its first convention in June, 1898, the latter group seceded under the guidance of Berger, Debs, and several others, and formed a new Social Democratic Party of America, with no colonization strings attached.[18] The new organization aided the socialist cause in Milwaukee by a clearer enunciation of principles.

Dropping the colonization feature paved the way for a union of the Social Democratic Party of America with elements of the Socialist Labor party. In several hectic meetings on July 8 and 10, 1899, the latter party split into two distinct factions. One was led by Daniel De Leon, and the other by Morris Hillquit.[19] Eventually the followers of De Leon held forth as the only Socialist Labor party, while the supporters of Hillquit moved toward the Social Democratic party. Milwaukeeans at first opposed an alliance with the Hillquit group, but their opposition went for nought. At a unity convention in Indianapolis, beginning July 29, 1901, the Hillquit group cooperated with the Social Democratic party in forming a new Socialist Party of America. Under a state autonomy provision, each state organization was granted independence in matters of local business,

[14] See *Vorwaerts*, June 20, 1897, for complete platform.
[15] *Vorwaerts*, January 3, 1893.
[16] *Journal*, April 7, 1898.
[17] *Sentinel*, November 8, 1898.
[18] Chicago *The Social Democratic Herald*, July 9, 1898.
[19] *Appeal to Reason*, July 16, 1899.

and in the matter of its name. Consequently, Milwaukee and Wisconsin Socialists retained the name Social Democratic Party, and pursued the same policies as theretofore.[20]

At the same time the strength of the Milwaukee Social Democrats was manifested in their ability to take over the *Social Democratic Herald,* which had been published in Chicago as the national organ of the Social Democratic party, and to make it a strong Milwaukee Socialist and trade-unionist paper. The paper was removed to Milwaukee in August, 1901,[21] and performed the vital task of reaching English reading Socialists, while the *Vorwaerts* found its way to readers of German.

The appearance of the *Social Democratic Herald* in Milwaukee was a demonstration of the very close alliance between the Socialists and the Federated Trades Council of Milwaukee. For it was the support of the Trades Council in endorsing the paper as its official publication, in furthering subscriptions to the paper, and in giving financial assistance to it, which in a large measure made its long existence (1901-1912) possible.

As a matter of fact, the minutes of the Federated Trades Council clearly indicate that between 1900 and 1910, the Milwaukee trade-unions and the Social Democratic party were closely allied.[22] Their membership overlapped to a large degree, and by 1910, the result for which the Socialists had been striving—to make their party the political arm of the trade-union movement—had surely been reached. True, the unions as such had nothing to do with organizing or conducting the affairs of the Social Democratic party, nor had the party any voice in the conduct of the unions. However, it is noteworthy that most of the leaders of the unions also guided the destinies of the Social Democratic party of Milwaukee and Wisconsin. A kind of interlocking directorate existed between the two movements. There is no evidence that a Republican or Democratic boss controlled the unions in those years, as they did in other large industrial cities. With few exceptions, the secretaries, business agents, and executive officers of the unions were active members of the Social Democratic party; very often they were the candidates for public office of that party. Berger, Heath, Brockhausen,

[20] Milwaukee *The Social Democratic Herald,* August 17, 24, 1901. Hereafter referred to as *Herald.*

[21] *Ibid.,* August 17, 1901.

[22] Minutes of the Federated Trades Council of Milwaukee (at the Federated Trades Council Headqarters), 1900-1910.

Weber, Berner, Melms, Coleman, Elsner, and Strehlow are only a few of the names of outstanding trade-unionists who were victorious at the polls under the Social Democratic banner.[23]

At the outset, the political efforts of the Social Democrats met with little success at the polls, but by the fall of 1900, they had almost doubled the number of persons whose vote they could command.[24] By 1902, they were appealing to a more varied constituency. A serious attempt was made in that year to win a portion of the Italian vote of the third ward, and the Polish vote of the fourteenth. In both cases socialist propaganda was distributed in the native language of the inhabitants.[25] In this campaign an attempt was even made to bring the business man around to the Social Democratic view.[26]

The increased momentum of their 1902 spring campaign pushed the Social Democrats to a very creditable showing in the elections of April 1. They more than trebled their vote of the municipal elections of 1900, and almost doubled their gubernatorial total of that year. The Social Democratic vote totaled over 8,400.[27] Every sixth voter was now a Social Democrat, and the party newspaper expressed its satisfaction over the results of the propaganda campaign.[28]

About this time the reputation of Milwaukee as a graft-free city was receiving some astounding reverses. Evidences of corruption and collusion in the city's government were appearing day after day. By August, 1903, the daily press was filled with accusations and exposures of city officials and aldermen.[29] Of course, the exposures benefited the Socialists, since they had no municipal office holders in their ranks at this early date.

The Socialist leader, Victor L. Berger, raised the argument that the reason for graft in municipal affairs and its toleration by the people was the capitalist system and the prevalence of a business-man's ethics. Berger stated:[30]

[23] *History of the Milwaukee Social-Democratic Victories* (Alfred W. Mance, ed., Milwaukee, 1911), opposite 49.
[24] *Herald,* April 5, 1902.
[25] Milwaukee *The Daily News,* January 21, 1902. Hereafter referred to as *Daily News. Herald,* February 22, 1902.
[26] *Herald,* February 22, 1902.
[27] *Sentinel,* April 2, 1902; *Journal,* April 2, 1902.
[28] *Herald,* April 5, 1902.
[29] *Sentinel, Journal, Daily News,* August, 1903; see Daniel W. Hoan, *City Government* (New York, 1936), 39-41, for portions of later confessions of persons involved in the corruption.
[30] *Herald,* August 22, 1903.

> Public office has become a public graft under the capitalist system. Stealing from the state or the municipality has become so common that it is looked upon with great indulgence by the average citizen. The average business man considers it a semi-legitimate business for the business man in the "business" of politics to make as much out of his investment as he can—and even the American trades-union man, being imbued with the spirit of the business man, or with the grafting instinct of the politician, often shows an appalling leniency towards graft and grafters.
>
> There is only one cure for corruption, that is, Socialism—Socialism that has gone into the flesh and blood of the man. And anyone who wants to abolish corruption entirely, must be in favor of the total abolition of the capitalist system.

The Social Democratic membership and press took up Berger's reasoning and reiterated it whenever they had an opportunity.

When a number of Milwaukee's leading business men decided to call a mass indignation meeting against corruption at the end of September, 1903, the Socialist leaders cleverly refused to have their names linked with the meeting, and yet virtually managed to capture it.[31] Unofficially, the campaign for the spring election of 1904 began with the above indignation meeting and the graft disclosures. Each party endeavored to prove to the people of Milwaukee that it was interested in honest municipal government, and wanted to drive the grafters out of office.

Since the Social-Democrats[32] boasted of no office-holders in their ranks, they could not be the targets of abuse as corrupt officials. They were quick to exploit this political advantage, and in large measure gained enough new votes from anti-graft groups to give them their first victories at the polls. True, adherents to the Social-Democratic cause had been steadily climbing in number, and the party's campaigns had become progressively more strenuous, but it was the graft exposures which boosted the party into its newly prominent position.

In the Milwaukee elections of April 5, 1904, the Social-Democratic party elected nine aldermen, four county supervisors, two justices of the peace, and two constables. The ninth, tenth, eleventh, twentieth, twenty-first, and twenty-second wards

[31] *Sentinel*, September 29, 1903; *Journal*, September 29, 1903; *Herald*, October 3, 1903.

[32] Between January 30 and February 6, 1904, a hyphen was added to the Social Democratic party designation and to the name of the party paper (Milwaukee *Social-Democratic Herald*, February 6, 1904).

proved to be real strongholds of the party. Frederic Heath, Emil Seidel, Edmund Melms, and six others were elected as the first Socialist aldermen in the city. Furthermore, Victor Berger polled over 15,300 votes for mayor, again nearly doubling the previous Socialist vote, and running close behind the Republican candidate, and not too far behind the Democratic winner, David S. Rose.[33] The Socialists had tasted some of the fruits of victory for the first time, and now commanded more than one out of every four votes in Milwaukee.

But for a peculiar circumstance at the polls, the Social Democrats would have elected several more aldermen and polled three thousand additional votes. The Socialist Labor party which had won only a few hundred votes at the previous election, received 3,600 votes in April, 1903. Since they carried on no campaign, there is every reason to believe that about three thousand of these votes were meant for the hard-working Social-Democrats. Even the opposition papers agreed that voters, unacquainted with the operation of the new voting machines, confused the Socialist Labor party with the Social-Democratic party. This was especially possible since the S. L. P. lever was immediately below that of the Social-Democratic party, and the booths were poorly lighted.[34]

In spite of the above unfortunate circumstances, the Social-Democrats had every reason to feel satisfied with the outcome of the 1904 spring elections. This was the last time the Socialist Labor party proved meddlesome to them, and the faithful Social Democrats were finally repaid for their work by having some of their candidates elected to public office. The first political victory of the Social-Democratic party was to prove a stepping stone to greater victories.

During the years 1904-1908, the party firmly intrenched itself on the political scene in Milwaukee. After the victories of April, 1904, the Social-Democrats went about the task of conquering the electorate with a new confidence. They expected to elect a number of men to the state legislature in the fall, and to poll a great vote for the Socialist party candidate for president of the United States. Both expectations were realized. Five Social-Democrats, all trade-unionists, were elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly, and Eugene V. Debs, Socialist candidate for

[33] *Daily News, Journal, Sentinel,* April 6, 1904; *Herald,* April 9, 1904.
[34] *Journal, Daily News,* April 6, 1904; *Herald,* April 9, 1904.

president, ran several thousand votes ahead of the Democratic presidential nominee in Milwaukee County.[35]

The Milwaukee Social-Democrats had always attempted to uphold a realistic attitude and platform. Yet they were considered fanatics, visionaries, utopians, and a good many other things, by numerous business and professional men of the city.[36] After the elections of 1904, the Socialists saw that there was a real possibility of their carrying the city. With this in mind, they decided to make themselves more acceptable to the business and professional men who were smarting under Republican and Democratic misrule. They set aside the plank in their platform which required that in the future no franchise should be granted to private public utility corporations, and adopted one demanding special guarantees from corporations applying for city franchises. Milwaukee needed additional railroad and street car facilities, and the Socialists were not going to stand in the way of getting those facilities by blindly adhering to a so-called axiom of their party. They would no longer vote en bloc against any franchise submitted to the common council.[37]

The ability of the Socialists to compromise, plus the reputation of honesty which they had gained in the common council,[38] won them five new aldermen in 1906. Two of the more rabid Socialists failed in their quest for reelection, so that party elected a total of twelve aldermen out of forty-six.[39] Similarly, in the fall elections of 1906, a gain was recorded; the Social-Democrats polled thirty-six per cent of the vote in Milwaukee county, and throughout the state ran second only to the LaFollette Republicans.[40]

In the years 1906 to 1908, the Socialists did a great deal to perfect their organization both in and out of public office. The first thing they did was attempt to pay up a deficit of $2,500 in the party coffers; they began this endeavor by asking for a day's wages from members who could spare it, and in one week they raised almost six hundred dollars.[41] Then they turned to

[35] *Journal*, November 9, 1904; *Herald*, November 12, 1904.
[36] Conversation of author with George Lounsbury on December 26, 1941. Mr. Lounsbury is a former editor of the *Sentinel*, and was active in what he calls Tory circles during the rise of the Milwaukee Socialists.
[37] *Herald*, January 27, February 3, 1906.
[38] *Milwaukee Free Press*, March 5, 1904 Hereafter referred to as *Free Press*.
[39] *Sentinel*, April 4, 1904.
[40] *Herald*, November 10, 1906.
[41] *Ibid.*, December 1, 8, 1906.

perfecting their propaganda machine. Lectures were regularly sponsored on Sunday evenings, and the method of disseminating literature was made more effective.

The Socialists and sympathizers, who volunteered to distribute party literature, were called the Bundle Brigade. The effectiveness of that corps of faithful workers was made possible only by a complete central organization, which included a literature committee and a cooperative bindery. When a certain type of literature was to be dispersed, the county executive committee would so inform the county organizer. He, in turn, would apprise the individual ward chairmen, and they would notify the volunteer workers, the Bundle Brigade, under them. By 1908, the organization of the Bundle Brigade had become so efficient, that within forty-eight hours after it had been decided to circularize the people on any public question, the literature desired could be placed in almost every house in the city in the language best understood by its inhabitants. Of course, the fact that the party had its own printing presses aided immeasurably in that work, both by keeping costs down to a minimum and by abolishing many inconveniences.[42] The Bundle Brigade was the greatest example of the thorough organization of the Social-Democratic party of Milwaukee.

In the interim, between the elections of 1906 and 1908, the state legislature was prevailed upon to pass a new law governing the election of aldermen in Milwaukee. Ostensibly, the new piece of legislation was to guarantee that Milwaukee elect an honest set of city councilmen, but it strongly hinted of Democratic and Republican cooperation in order to make certain that the Social-Democrats were not victorious in the near future. The new law provided that Milwaukee's common council should be made up of one alderman from each ward and twelve aldermen elected at large in the city, instead of the traditional two aldermen from each ward.[43]

In the election following the passage of this law, the Socialists showed a distinct gain in votes and captured nine wards against six in 1906. Yet, they elected only nine aldermen in 1908, while they had elected twelve in 1906.[44] The new election law

[42] *History of the Milwaukee Social-Democratic Victories,* 15-18.
[43] *The Laws of Wisconsin, Joint Resolutions and Memorials, 1909* (Madison, 1909), section 925-22a. This volume includes the laws of 1907 which were amended or unchanged.
[44] *Journal,* April 8, 1908; *Herald,* April 11, 1908.

caused the Socialists a definite setback in 1908, but they were far from discouraged, and looked confidently to the future.

The spring elections of 1909 marked a renewal of Social-Democratic triumphs. Emil Seidel carried the city in a special election for alderman at large, caused by the death of one of the incumbents. Likewise, Mrs. Victor L. Berger and Frederick Heath, editor of the *Social-Democratic Herald,* were elected to the school board.[45] Seidel's victory was a high point in the party's history; it marked the first time the Socialists had carried the city since they had begun putting up men for office.

Just one year after his election as alderman at large, Emil Seidel swept Milwaukee in the election for mayor, and carried the city by one of the largest pluralities in its history. Along with him, the Social-Democrats elected their entire city ticket, all seven aldermen at large, and two civil judges. Victor Berger, who had led the Socialists through so many campaigns, was finally elected to a public office as one of the seven aldermen at large, and Richard Elsner, whose name had been appearing on Socialist tickets since 1898, was at last elected as a judge of the civil court. The greatest result of the election was that the Socialists had carried the entire city administration, and now had a majority of twenty-one to fourteen in the common council, and eleven to five in the county board of supervisors.[46]

It is of interest to note that Victor Berger, and not Emil Seidel, bore the brunt of the opposition's abuse during the days before the election. Victor Berger and the Social-Democratic party were synonymous in the minds of many. The morning after the election, the Democratic *Sentinel* expressed that feeling as follows:[47]

> To the public mind, Social Democracy in this city, and the committee[48] which will hold Mayor Seidel and his fellow-officials in the hollow of its hands, means—Victor Berger.
>
> We are not saying that to belittle Mr. Seidel, who has our respect as a citizen and our good wishes as a public official, but simply to state an essential and important fact about our local Social Democracy.
>
> Substantially it means—Victor L. Berger.
>
> Social Democracy in Milwaukee is what it is, either for good or ill, chiefly because of Mr. Berger. He is its pioneer,

[45] *Journal,* April 7, 1909.
[46] *Journal,* April 6, 1910; *Herald,* April 9, 1910.
[47] *Sentinel,* April 6, 1910.
[48] The city central committee of the Social-Democratic party.

its propagandist, its sponsor. Its history is mainly his biography as a citizen of Milwaukee. He rocked it in its cradle, reared it, and now exults to see it battling in control of this great city.

The *Sentinel* here exaggerated the facts a little, but brought out some essential truths.

As the leader of the Social-Democratic party, it was fitting that Victor Berger was elected the following November as the first Socialist congressman in the United States. He carried the fifth congressional district of Wisconsin in a close struggle with Henry F. Cochems, the Republican candidate. The area he carried consisted of parts of Milwaukee and Waukesha counties, which were city and rural sections respectively.[49] It was in the latter locality that Oscar Ameringer, who had been hired as an organizer in Milwaukee, proved of great assistance to Berger.[50]

Aside from electing Berger to congress, the Social-Democrats carried the entire county of Milwaukee and sent thirteen members to the state legislature. In Milwaukee they elected the sheriff, district attorney, coroner, county clerk, register of deeds, and the clerk of courts.[51]

Thus, in one short year the Social-Democratic party had reversed the governmental status quo in Milwaukee. In the elections of April and November, 1910, they had gained complete control of the city and county, both in administrative and legislative capacities, and had elected a congressman in the person of their able guide, Victor L. Berger.

These Social-Democrats of Milwaukee adhered to a set of principles which were in the main expressed for them by Berger. Berger was professedly not a Marxist. Rather, he gained most of his ideas on socialism from Ferdinand Lassalle, Karl Kautsky, and Eduard Bernstein. He repeatedly quoted the works of these three men, but seldom referred to Marx to substantiate his views. In the main, Berger and his followers believed in public ownership of all public utilities, and in the gradual working over of the capitalist state into a cooperative commonwealth "by means of every kind of real, not pretended, social reform."[52]

[49] *Herald,* November 12, 1910.
[50] Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don't Weaken* (New York, 1940), 283-284.
[51] *Sentinel,* November 9, 1910.
[52] *Herald,* October 12, 1901.

In one particular, the mass of Milwaukee Socialists could not follow Berger's theories. That particular dealt with arming the people along the lines of the Swiss militia system. Berger's idea was to arm the masses so that the wealthy could not arbitrarily subjugate the workers. One of his articles on this subject was written in an especially excited vein, and brought him a great deal of criticism.[53] Likewise, it did the Social-Democratic party no good. Later the article was called "Ballots and Bullets" by the foes of the first Socialist congressman of America. It was used to an extreme by the opponents of the Social-Democratic party and of Berger in the campaigns of 1910, and appeared later to plague Berger in his fights for reelection.[54] Still the majority of Milwaukee's citizenry did not take Berger's most radical idea as a vital part of the Socialist philosophy. They voted Social-Democratic in 1910 for a number of sound reasons.

* * *

The party reached its enviable position of November, 1910, through no fanatical grip on a set of principles, but through an ability and willingness to logically compromise, and appeal to a continually larger and more varied constituency. Its first years were occupied mainly with winning the confidence and vote of the trade-unionists. Gradually, it won over the bulk of the working class, and it was not long until the small business man was made the object of a successful appeal.

The perseverance of the Social-Democrats of Milwaukee was something to excite admiration. Their organization in 1910 would be the envy of any political machine today. Every ward branch was a self-sufficient entity, which carried on propaganda for the cause of socialism, and campaigned with vigor before each election. The development of the party press, and the dissemination of party literature had progressed almost to perfection, with a Bundle Brigade ready to do its duty whenever called. Even the Polish citizens of the fourteenth ward finally succumbed to the constantly reiterated statements of the Socialists. Other American cities had Socialists and strong Socialist parties, but none could boast of a leadership and an organization equal to that of Milwaukee's Social-Democrats.

[53] *Ibid.*, July 15, 1905.

[54] Berger, "What is the Matter with Milwaukee," in *The Independent*, LXVIII, No. 3203 (April 21, 1910), 840; *Free Press*, March 27, 31, 1910; *Daily News*, March 2, 1910; *Journal* November 5, 7, 1910.

The effects of the Socialists' organization, perseverance, literature distribution, and willingness to compromise were not strange. By 1910, the people of Milwaukee in general did not look at them as hair-brained agitators. Even the shouting of the old party politicians concerning Victor Berger's beliefs on ballots and bullets struck deaf ears. It had become exceedingly difficult to convince serious minded individuals that the stolid workers who composed the bulk of the Social-Democratic party were plotting a sudden overthrow of society. And they were not.

It was realized that, even if they wanted to, the Socialists could not abolish capitalism in Milwaukee. On the other hand, they were the only party whose hands and reputation were not soiled by connections with the corruption which had recently been uncovered in municipal affairs. Furthermore, they presented a slate of honest men, and an appearance of sincerity which was sadly lacking in Republican and Democratic circles. Rather than suffer another administration with the old party politicians at the helm, the voters of Milwaukee decided to give their Socialist neighbors a chance to prove their worth.

The bulk of the material used in the preparation of this thesis was found in the following three Milwaukee repositories: the Milwaukee Public Library (including its South Side branch), the Milwaukee County Historical Society (wherein most of the remaining records of the Social-Democratic party are now kept), and the Federated Trades Council of Milwaukee. The libraries of the University of Illinois and the University of Wisconsin were extensively employed, as was the John Crerar library in Chicago.

Among the most interesting manuscripts referred to was an unpublished letter from the office of Victor L. Berger to Daniel De Leon. A corrected draft of the letter is in the files of the Milwaukee Historical Society. The minutes of the Federated Trades Council of Milwaukee, 1900-1911, found at the headquarters of the Trades Council, provided a fruitful source of information. The contemporary local newspapers, and the socialist press in general, contributed voluminous details to the story; the Milwaukee *Social-Democratic Herald*, 1901-1910, and the *Wisconsin Vorwaerts*, 1893-1910, were especially helpful.

The following articles deserve mention: Victor L. Berger, "Early Socialists in Milwaukee," in *History of the Social Democratic Victories* (Alfred W. Mance, ed., Milwaukee, 1911), 53-64; Eugene Victor Debs, "How I Became a Socialist," in *The Comrade,* I, No. 7 (April, 1902), 48-49; Frederic F. Heath, "How I Became a Socialist," in *The Comrade,* II, No. 7 (April, 1903), 154-155; J. Martin Klotsche, "The 'United Front' Populists," in *The Wisconsin Magazine of History,* XX, No. 4 (June, 1937), 275-389.

The degree of completeness attained by this work would by no means have been possible without the personal interviews which the author had with some of the men who were most active in Milwaukee politics during the period surveyed. Emil Seidel, Frederic Heath, William George Bruce, and George Lounsbury were four of those men who graciously gave the author some of their time in helping to flll in the picture.

VITA

Marvin Wachman was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on March 24, 1917. He attended the Milwaukee public schools, graduating from Washington High School in 1935. He enrolled at Northwestern University in September, 1935, and graduated with a Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in 1939. While doing his undergraduate work, he received scholarships each year. He captained the Northwestern University tennis team in 1938, and upon graduation was awarded the Western Conference medal for proficiency in scholarship and athletics. From 1937-1939, he served as a zoology research assistant.

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